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ABSTRACT

The conflict resolution communication attempts practiced by a food cooperative were studied to determine if they revealed the primary ideals of the counterculture philosophy. To highlight the findings, the study also examined the conflict resolution communication attempts of a fraternity--a representative of the dominant culture philosophy. Data were gathered through participant observation, interviews, surveys, and reviews of the literature written by and about the organizations. Results showed that the conflict resolution communication attempts of the food cooperative were based on a counterculture philosophy on the organizational level (ritual, procedures, clothing styles, jargon, and norms), but were essentially the same as the fraternity conflict resolution communication attempts on the core philosophy level. The findings indicate that while the formal conflict resolution formats of the two groups differed, the power bases were the same, with power usually based on who had information and position. While the cooperative generally used a form of voting within the consensus process framework instead of the actual process consensus itself, the fraternity simply discussed an issue and then voted on it. The egalitarian ideals advocated by the cooperative were only superficially evident in its attempts to resolve conflicts. (FL)

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The Symbolic Interactionist Use of Participant Observation: A Study of Conflict Resolution Communication in a Countercultural Setting

The purpose of this article is to explain the symbolic interactionist use of participant observation. In doing so we will clarify the meanings of, and relationship between, symbolic interaction and participant observation. We will describe a study we undertook, which employed the participant observation method within a symbolic interactionist framework, to exemplify the application of this approach. Our study examined conflict resolution communication in a countercultural setting.

The symbolic interactionist framework is a commonly accepted perspective from which to study communication. In "Communication as Symbolic Interaction: A Synthesis," Nwanko describes the communicative process as "symbolic interaction in which two symbolic systems (persons or groups) interact by use of significant symbols."[1]

Gronbeck outlines a variety of research methods which the communication analyst may employ within the symbolic interactionist framework.

> The participant observation techniques allow researchers to dig deeply and systematically into "texts;" the fantasy theme methodology bids the specification of sources of wholesale cultural mythoi and visions; Burkean concepts explicate the ways in which human motives are encoded and lived out in messages; and, the macroscopic investigations of interpersonal constructions, their ritualizations and expressions, lead steadily toward a "grand theory"

CS 504 511

of society as formed, enacted, and regulated by communication/ rhetorical processes.[2]

Our position advocates the symbolic interactionist use of participant observation and stresses the importance of the "texts" which are studied.

The participant observer seeks to understand the view of the world as perceived by the subjects being studied. "Essentially, the researcher 'brackets' his own assumptions to see how the subjects of the investigation themselves view everyday life situations."[3] Beach emphasizes the "study of social order within naturally occurring events. Particular attention is drawn to how everyday activities are routinely accomplished according to the rules, maxims, and strategies that practical reasoners use to organize communication."[4]

Participant observation provides a unique insight into a research problem. "Notwithstanding, participant observation has extremely great potential for communication research, because it can give the researcher detailed knowledge of communication processes in context."[5] The researcher is able to observe specific events and is also able to observe previous and following occurrences.

Gerry Philipsen used participant observation in "Speaking 'Like a Man' in Teamsterville." He was interested in finding what groups in the United States view speaking as an effective means of social influence. Philipsen states there is a lack of information in this area and this deficit "should be remedied by descriptive and comparative studies of American speech communities."[6] In a similar study, Thurmon Garner used participant observation to analyze obscene folkloric speech events, popularly known in Black communities as "playing the dozens," in "Playing the Dozens: Folklore as Strategies for Living."[7]

Statement of Problem

The problem of our study dealt with conflict resolution communication attempts practiced by the Woodstock Food Cooperative. (Pseudonyms are used in the place of real names of individuals and organizations discussed in this study.)[8] We sought to find if the primary ideals of the counterculture were evidenced in the communication attempts at conflict resolution.

Analysis was highlighted through comparison and contrast with another organization. The organization, Sigma Tau Omega Fraternity, represented an opposite position on the philosophical continuum (using counterculture as one end on the continuum and dominant culture as the other end). The Co-op presented itself as based on counterculture philosophy and Sigma Tau Omega presented itself as based on dominant culture philsophy.

The Co-op and Sigma Tau Omega represented two ends on the counterculture-dominant culture continuum. We hypothesized there would be differing communication attempts to conflict resolution within each organization. Furthermore, the different communication attempts would reflect their cultural base. Analysis of these attempts was focused upon formal settings (meetings) and informal settings (outside of meetings). Regarding formal settings, we hypothesized different conflict resolution communication attempts would be based on the consensus principle (everyone must agree) practiced by the Co-op and the "majority rules" principle practiced by Sigma Tau Omega. With informal settings, we hypothesized different conflict resolution communication attempts would be based on the egalitarian (all members have equal power) principle practiced by the Co-op and the hierarchy principle practiced by Sigma Tau Omega. The hierarchy

within Sigma Tau Omega was based on pin number, role as a fraternity officer, and physical size of the member.[9]

Consideration of Method

Symbolic Interactionism

Three primary sociological approaches to the study of human behavior are functionalist, conflict, and interactionist. The functionalist perspective, led by Durkheim, views society as a structure of interrelated parts. The conflict perspective, influenced strongly by Marx, sees social change as evolving from conflict between the social classes. The interactionist perspective, emphasized by Mead, is concerned with the social interactions of everyday life.[10]

Early interactionism was based on symbolic behavior, the interpretive element, and the notion of emergence. The genesis of symbolic interactionism can be seen through the work of five people: James, Cooley, Dewey, Thomas, and Mead. James, a pragmatist, stressed habit, instinct, and self. Cooley, from the Chicago school, utilized sympathetic introspection: we should understand the meanings and interpretations of the actor. Dewey, also from the Chicago school, emphasized the phylogenetic framework; human behavior is different in degree, rather than in kind. Thomas felt that human behavior methods should tap the values and attitudes of the actor. George Mead, from the Chicago School, is recognized as the father of symbolic interactionism. In Mind, Self, and Society he states that organisms are viewed in relation to their environment and the environment is determined by the sensitivity of the organism.[11]

There are four main schools of thought within symbolic interactionism: the Chicago, Iowa, Dramaturgical, and Ethnomethodological schools. The Chicago school, led by the theories of Blumer, is based on a qualitative and humanistic approach: the world should be viewed "through the eyes of the actor." Blumer sees human behavior as unpredictable and indeterminate. The self is composed of the "I" and the "me." Within this framework the "I" is impulsive and the "me" is a collection of organized attitudes. Perceptions are initially received through the "I" and then are filtered through the "me." Blumer's image of human behavior dictates his method.[12]

The Iowa school, led by the theories of Kuhn, is based on a quantitative and scientific approach. Kuhn believes that symbolic interactionism can be empirically measured and operationalized. He sees human behavior as being role played. As opposed to Blumer, he views the self as being comprised only of the "me." Kuhn's method dictates his image of human behavior.[13]

The comparison of approaches purported by Blumer and Kuhn is clarified through Littlejohn's discussion of the foundations of symbolic interactionism.

> While Blumer strongly criticizes the trend in the behavioral sciences to operationalize, Kuhn makes a special point to do just that! As a result, Kuhn's work moves much more toward microscopic analysis than does the traditional Chicago approach. In other words, Kuhn prescribes the very methods which Blumer dislikes--a) adhering to scientific method protocol, b) engaging in replication of research studies, c) relying on the testing of research hypothesis, and d) employing so-called operational procedures.[14]

By using a qualitative and humanistic approach, Blumer's method is more sensitive to flexibility if his image of the observed human behavior dictates such a need. Kuhn's use of a quantitative and scientific approach results in a method which is less sensitive to change.

The Dramaturgical school, led by the theories of Goffman, purports that social interaction is based on the management of the impressions we receive from each other. We "put on a show" for each other. This perspective is evidenced in Goffman books such as The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life,[15] Interaction Ritual,[16] and Encounters.[17]

The Ethnomethodological school, led by the theories of Garfinkel, studies the rational properties of indexical expressions as ongoing accomplishments in everyday life. Lauer and Handel broaden the perspective by describing it as the study of folk methods for deciding on questions of fact.[18]

The four main schools of thought within symbolic interactionism engulf various theoretical and methodological positions regarding the understanding and study of human behavior. Although there is variety, Blumer has presented a common theoretical thread which runs through the four schools of symbolic interactionist thought.

Blumer coined the term symbolic interactionism. In Symbolic Interactionism, he constructs three premises of symbolic interactionism which are accepted in all areas of the field:

> The first premise is that human beings act toward things on the basis of the meanings that the things have for them. . . . The second premise is that the meaning of such things is derived from, or arises out of, the social interaction that one has with one's fellows. . . . The third premise is that these meanings

are handled in, and modified through, an interpretive process used by the person in dealing with the things he encounters.[19]

Meanings are viewed as social products: stimulation, interpretation, and response.

The wide perspective provided by symbolic interactionism can be appreciated when one considers the difference between the Chicago and Iowa Schools. The arguments and positions maintained by these schools engulf the qualitative and quantitative approaches. On the one side, Blumer advocates the qualitative approach through the use of participant observation, so the researcher can understand the view of the actor's world through the actor's eyes. On the other side, Kuhn advocates the quantitative approach through the use of empirical measurement and operationalism. The Who Am I Test?, constructed by Kuhn, is an example of such an attempt.[20]

We chose a qualitative and humanistic approach, as outlined through Blumer's three basic premises, as the most beneficial for this study. Such an approach allows for, what Howard S. Becker underlines as, "rich experiential context" of observation of the event and observation of previous and following events.[21]

Gerald Miller discusses similar considerations in "Laboratory Versus Field Approaches to the Study of Communication and Conflict." He limits his discussion to ways that both approaches complement each other.

> The collection of descriptive data enhances our understanding of some of the dimensions of "real-world" social conflict. . . . Field research can also aide in the identification of significant constructs, a task to which I have already assigned high priority. By observing communication and social conflict in natural settings,

> an ingenious person may inductively arrive at new category systems, or new classes of variables. . . . Laboratory settings allow the researcher to construct the environment that he wishes to study, and they enable him to manipulate independent variables more unambiguously.[22]

Using a more abstract style, Miller metaphorically describes the complementary roles played by laboratory and field research.

> But before one can embark on . . . a journey, he must choose a conveyance. The laboratory and the field represent two vehicles available to our traveler. To carry the analogy a step further, the laboratory can be likened to a private limousine and field to public transportation. In the cloistered confines of the former, the researcher can partially create an environment to study and to manipulate; if he wants a rear-seat bar or a private telephone, he may install them; if he tires of them, he may have them removed. The disadvantage, of course, is that he may lose touch with what is going on outside the curtained windows. In the din and clamor of the latter, the researcher's fellow travelers often jostle him with such bewildering confusion and rapidity that he becomes uncertain whether he is approaching his stop, or whether he has, in fact, passed it. Still, if he can keep his wits together, he can derive satisfaction from the knowledge that his ride has exposed him to a glimpse of reality not readily accessible to the limousine passenger.[23]

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The symbolic interactionist perspective allows research from the qualitative and quantitative approaches. As previously mentioned, Blumer advocates the qualitative approach through the use of participant obser-

vation, so the researcher can work to better understand the view of the actor's world through the actor's eyes. From the other view, Kuhn advocates the quantitative approach through the use of empirical measurement and operationalism.[24]

We utilized the qualitative approach, emphasized by Blumer, and based our decision on the specific needs of the situations studied. We also used the dramaturgical perspective, emphasized by Goffman, for analysis of the research problem.

Understanding Communication Through Symbolic Interactionism

One can gain a clear understanding of the concept of communication through the framework offered by the premises of symbolic interactionism. That is, day-to-day communication can be readily interpreted through the symbolic interactionist perspective.

As previously discussed, symbolic interactionism provides a wide perspective for the observation of human behavior. In fact symbolic interactionism is one of the broadest overviews of the role of communication in society. It influences many areas of communication theory, including role theory, reference group theory, social perception and person perception, self theory, interpersonal theory, and language and culture.[25]

Manis and Meltzer provide six basic propositions of symbolic interaction. First, the mind, self, and society are processes of personal and interpersonal interaction. Second, language is the primary mechanism in the development of the individual's mind and self. Third, mind is the internalization of social processes in the individual. Fourth, behaviors are constructed by the person in the course of acting. Fifth,

definition of the situation by the actor is the primary means for human conduct. Sixth, the self is comprised of societal definitions as well as unique definitions.[26]

Littlejohn emphasizes "the need to study the individual in relation to the social situation . . . the person cannot be studied apart from the setting in which behavior occurs."[27] To achieve this need "the goal of the researcher must be to empathize with the subject, to enter his realm of experience, and to attempt to understand the unique value of the person."[28]

The "definition of the situation" is stressed as one of Manis and Meltzer's basic propositions of symbolic interaction. Faules and Alexander develop this proposition and explain its ramifications.

> The symbolic interactionist defines the naming or labeling of the things being perceived as "definition of the situation." The implication of defining situations is broader and more communicative than merely labeling the perception; "definition of a situation" locates the process of observing an event and then finding symbols to communicate the event. Thus defining situations implies that events are symbolized so that they may be explained to others, and indeed this is the process of informing.[29]

During the informing process there is an exchange of information between, or among, the individuals. "Information may be defined as the report of personal perceptions and of social realities that are exchanged between people. Communication is the method most often used to exchange or collect information, because people rely on symbols to link themselves with other people."[30]

Faules and Alexander highlight this process by acknowledging other

exchanges which are accomplished. "The communication process should reveal an individual's lines of conduct and self-conception."[31] "The basic 'stuff' of communication is content. . . . The way in which those ideas are communicated defines the relationship between the communicators. In other words, communication simultaneously offers both content and relationship."[32]

From this discussion, the relationship between symbolic interactionism and communication can be better understood. Communication is central to symbolic interaction. "To the symbolic interactionist, communication is at the heart of human action."[33] It is through communication that we come to understand symbolic interaction. Similarly, symbolic interactionism provides a base from which we can interpret communication. "Symbolic interactionism provides an excellent perspective in which to frame the study of communication."[34]

Our research problem involved analysis of conflict resolution communication attempts. We were able to study the content of conflict and the relationship of those involved by observing their communication, as communication offers both content and relationship. Such observations were collected through a participant observation framework. "The student of human conduct . . . must get inside the actors world and must see the world as the actor sees it, for the actor's behavior takes place on the basis of his/her own particular meanings."[35]

Conflict resolution is a "process of communication and exchange."[36] An inquiry into communication and conflict must give fundamental consideration for the context within which the conflict takes place. Participant observation allows for, what Howard S. Becker underlines as, "rich experiential context" of observation of the event and observation of

previous and following events."[37]

Participant Observation

There are two primary research bases in the social sciences. Johnson defines these bases, qualitative and quantitative research, as follows. Qualitative research affords an indepth, detailed, descriptive account of social actions occurring at a specific time and place. Quantitative research usually involves statistical measurements of various kinds which are cross tabulated with one another to explain the variability of a social event."[38]

Within qualitative research, participant observation and field research refer to a manner of conducting a scientific investigation where the observer maintains a face-to-face involvement with a particular social setting. A field researcher is one who participates with a group of people in order to observe their everyday actions in their natural social settings."[39]

Labovitz and Hagedorn acknowledge five disadvantages and five advantages of participant observation. It is beneficial to recognize these strengths and weaknesses so the researcher can work to strengthen the weak areas and capitalize on the strong areas as much as possible.

The five disadvantages are 1) there is a lack of reliability resulting from random observations, 2) the researcher may sensitize subjects by his presence, 3) the actual role taken by the observer narrows his range of experience, 4) the researcher may become so involved in the group that he loses his objectivity, and 5) the researcher must wait passively for occurrences. The five advantages are 1) the observations take place in

a "natural" setting, 2) the researcher is able to observe the emotional reactions of his subjects, 3) a great deal of information can be obtained, 4) the researcher is able to record the context in which observations occur, and 5) if the researcher can establish rapport, he may be able to ask sensitive questions that wouldn't otherwise be possible.[40]

The wide range of areas investigated through participant observation poses the need for basic ideals which field researchers can strive to abide by. With regard to methodology, Liebow quotes Hylan Lewis on the scientific method in relation to participant observation. "The scientific method is doing one's darndest with his brains, no holds barred."[41]

Junker takes this one step further by emphasizing the "percept to concept" approach. In this manner observation, recording, and reporting should insure that the researcher has the opportunity to relate insightful experience to theoretical analysis, back and forth--weaving the fabric of knowledge.[42]

Liebow closes his study of streetcorner men by offering an encompassing comment on the participant observation approach. "In retrospect, it seems as if the degree to which one becomes a participant is as much a matter of perceiving oneself as a participant as it is of being accepted as a participant by others."[43]

Application of Method

Participant observation was the primary method of data gathering. I had two periods of contact with the Woodstock countercultural community.[44] The first was a 17 month period between 1979 and 1981 in which I lived in the community and participated with the Co-op as a member. The second

period between March 1981 and March 1982 was spent doing fieldwork research in the Woodstock community and particularly at the Woodstock Food Co-op.

I had two periods of contact with Sigma Tau Omega Fraternity. The first was a 10 month period between 1980 and 1981 in which I lived with them as their Resident Supervisor. As Resident Supervisor, my duties involved serving as a liaison between the fraternity and the city of Woodstock and Midwestern State University. The second period between March 1981 and March 1982 was spent doing fieldwork research within the fraternity. I continued to serve as Resident Supervisor throughout the period of the study.

Zelditch classifies field methods into three broad classes which he defines as being primary:

> Type I. Participant Observation. The fieldworker observes and also participates in the same sense that he has durable social relations in the social system. . . .
>
> Type II. Informant Interviewing. We prefer a more restricted definition of the informant than most fieldworkers use, namely that he be called an "informant" only where he is reporting information presumed to be factually correct about others rather than about himself. . . .
>
> Type III. Enumeration and Samples. This includes surveys and direct, repeated, countable observations.[45]

Data was gathered through participant observation, informative interviews, three surveys, and a review of literature written by/about the organizations.

As a member of the Co-op, I had direct access to a variety of organizational situations. Access to the Co-op was exercised in five

areas: general business meetings, working at the Co-op, working on three committees, involvement with Co-op related social functions, and informally "hanging out" at the Co-op.

Informative interviews were conducted with members, and former members, of the Co-op. I sought to interview individuals who represented the variety of positions and perspectives maintained by the Co-op membership. Two surveys were used in the gathering of data. I administered a survey which involved processes in formal and informal settings, and the Co-op Orientation Committee (of which I was a member) administered a survey regarding the management of the Co-op. The Co-op printed monthly newsletters, handouts, submitted articles to the FORC newspaper and had articles written about it in the Woodstock area newspapers. I reviewed this literature for information related to the research problem.

Peacock discusses the use of a second observer in field research settings.[46] I utilized the observations of a second observer to compare and contrast against my own observations.

As Resident Supervisor of the fraternity, I had access to a variety of organizational situations. I was not a Sig Tau, but I was able to participate in practically all functions within the chapter, excluding ritual initiation of new members. Such involvement included chapter meetings, individual committee meetings, meals, social events, informal recreation, and other day-to-day aspects of fraternity life.

Informative interviews were conducted with members, and former members, of the fraternity. I sought to interview individuals who were representitive of the fraternity membership. I administered a survey which involved processes in formal and informal settings. Sigma Tau Omega printed alumni

newsletters, handouts, submitted articles to the national fraternity magazine (Spectrum), and had articles written about it in the Woodstock area newspapers. I reviewed this literature for information related to the research problem.

Analysis of conflict resolution communication attempts was divided between formal settings (meetings) and informal settings (outside of meetings) Although the study was concerned primarily with conflict resolution communication attempts, we analyzed the lifestyles and value structures of the Co-op and fraternity memberships to provide additional perspective for the findings.

Before entering the field, I divided the period of study into four quarters and planned to use each quarter for emphasis on different aspects of research. This approach provided me with a rough timetable within which I gauged my research efforts. We suggest it as an approach for future field research efforts. First quarter: introduce self and intentions to the organization, collect observations relating to the research problem and the overall setting, and collect any written literature written by/about the organizations. Second quarter: continue first quarter procedures, be watching for possible interviewees, and possibly begin interviewing. Third quarter: conduct interviews to compare and contrast interviewees perceptions with perceptions of the researcher. Fourth quarter: conduct surveys to compare and contrast surveyed perceptions with perceptions of the researcher.

The participant observation method has been used to study a variety of research problems and situations. Such a method requires the researcher to be aware of the accuracy of his/her observations and the replicability of his/her methods.

Validity and Reliability

Participant observation, as does any human research method, poses possible problems with validity and reliability. "The problem of validity in field research concerns the difficulty of gaining accurate or true impressions of the phenomea under study. The companion problem of reliability centers on the replicability of observations."[47] Deutscher presents a similar understanding.

> Following the customary distinction, the concept of validity addresses itself to the truth of an assertion that is made about something in the empirical world. The concept of reliability, on the other hand, concentrates on the degree of consistency in the observations obtained from the devices we employ: interviews, schedules, tests, documents, observers, informants.[48]

Zeller and Carmines provide further analysis of reliability.

> Reliability concerns the degree of repeatability and consistency of empirical measurements. A reliable measure is one that is repeatable and consistent, whereas an unreliable measure provides results that are unrepeatable and inconsistent.[49]

The ramifications of validity and reliability can be further detailed through integration of concepts. Best states "A test may be reliable, even though it is not valid. A valid test is always reliable."[50] In "Problems of Inference and Proof in Participant Observation," Becker emphasizes "the researcher faces the problem of how to analyze it (data) systematically and then to present his conclusions so as to convince other scientists of their validity."[51]

Riley correlates problems of reliability and validity in her discussion

of Whyte's Streetcorner Society. Riley examines the implications of personality, role, and influence.

> Especially in small social systems, introducing not only another person but also another role--that of observer--can affect markedly the relationships among the other members. Thus the researcher, often unintentionally and even unwittingly, controls, or changes to some extent the action he is observing. Although Whyte made a conscious effort to avoid influencing the actions of the group, the effect of his presence is shown in Doc's comment to him: "You've slowed me up plenty since you've been down here. Now when I do something, I have to think what Bill Whyte would want to know about it."[52]

McCall and Simmons view problems of reliability and validity as falling into three main categories:

1) reactive effects of the observer's presence or activities on the phenomena being observed,
2) distorting effects of selective perception and interpretation on the observer's part, and
3) limitations on the observer's ability to witness all relevant aspects of the phenomena in question.[53]

Regardless of the method of research, there is always a variability of human behavior which will affect research findings. An organization will not remain the same organization from year to year. It will gain and lose members and it will encounter a variety of experiences which will change it, however slight or extreme. Similarly, the variability among researchers can affect consistency among research findings. Each researcher perceives from a frame of reference which has been constructed by various experiences,

unique to each individual.

Recognition of the aforementioned problems, regarding validity and reliability, led us to view these concepts on a continuum rather than in an either/or sense. We acknowledge problems of validity and reliability with our method, just as there are problems of validity and reliability with any method. Our approach was to acknowledge these problems and to keep them in mind as we sought to attain high degrees of accuracy and truth.

Concern with theoretical considerations, such as validity and reliability, provide parameters which participant observers can work within. During the first stages of fieldwork I periodically reflected on these considerations as I worked to define my role in the field.

Entering the Field and Establishing Relations

Field researchers encounter an initial "trust" barrier when they enter the field. There are four primary theories of trust that researchers often recognize in dealing with the trust barrier. Johnson acknowledges these theories as being the exchange theory, individual-morality theory, adoption of membership morality theory, and the psychological need theory.[54]

The exchange theory is given consideration by Wax when she poses the question "Why should anybody in this group bother to talk to me?" She believes that there is an exchange between the researcher and the informant. Some of the typical "gifts" offered by the researcher include relieving boredom or loneliness, giving the informant a chance to express a grievance, or giving the informant an opportunity to play the ego-enhancing role of an authority or teacher. Wax points out that the elderly and unoccupied

informant is atypical and his statements must be considered in this light.[55]

The psychological-need theory is closely related to the exchange theory. The essence of this ideal is that the research project should be viewed as fulfilling psychological needs of the group.[56]

The individual-morality theory is based on the idea that a person becomes accepted as a participant observer more because of the type of person he turns out to be, in the eyes of the field contacts. than because of what he is researching.[57]

The adoption of membership morality theory provides a different approach to the morality ideal. From this perspective, the researcher will enhance his acceptance by adopting the morals and norms practiced by the group being studied.[58]

Being a member of the Co-op and Resident Supervisor of the fraternity did not ensure a position of trust within the organizations. Although I recognized aspects of all the aforementioned theories of trust, I found the individual morality theory to be most influential in the establishment of my role as a trustworthy individual and researcher. That is, I was accepted as a participant observer more because of the type of person I turned out to be, in the eyes of my field contacts, than because of what I was researching.

Once the participant observer has established a bond of trust, he/she can then begin to work from a participant observer level. Junker distinguishes between four theoretical social levels that the participant observer can work from.

As a complete participant, the field worker is a complete member of the in-group and his observer activities are wholly concealed. The field

worker's observer activities are not wholly concealed in the participant as observer role, but they are subordinated to participant activities; this level may limit his access to some kinds of information. The observer as participant observes activities that are made publicly known at the outset; this level will further limit his access to more guarded types of information. As a complete observer, activities range from the observer hiding behind a one-way mirror, at one extreme, to his activities being completely public in a special kind of theoretical group where there are "no secrets."[59]

I had little trouble gaining access to the organizations as I was a member of the Co-op and the Resident Supervisor of the fraternity. I was a member of the Co-op and Resident Supervisor of the fraternity primarily and a researcher of the organizations secondarily. This approach affected the participant observation level I worked from. Regarding Junker's four social levels of participant observation, I chose the participant as observer level. That is, I placed a higher priority on my role as a member/Resident Supervisor of the organizations than my role as a researcher of the organizations.

The various levels of participant observation have received attention in field study literature. Overt research is highly preferred in most settings and covert research is generally advocated only in settings which are outside of the moral community. Discussion of ethical considerations, regarding overt and covert research, will better clarify the preference for an overt approach.

Ethical Considerations

Participant observation, like politics, can be viewed from a positive or negative perspective, depending on who is defining the situation. When does observation become spying? Is it possible for a researcher to not influence the events being observed? Should equal ethical considerations be extended to groups such as Campus Crusade for Christ and the Klu Klux Klan? Who should make such decisions? We believe ethical distinctions should be clarified by all researchers throughout the course of study.

There has been much discussion regarding covert research and other ethical considerations. Fichter and Kolb state that those being studied can be harmed in three basic ways when the study is published: secrets of the organization can be revealed, the privacy of individuals can be violated, and reputations can be harmed.[60] Fichter and Kolb go on to mention a "free pass" category of research for situations where the organization being studied is outside of the moral community.

> In mid-century it seems probable that men like Hitler and Stalin, organized groups like "Murder Incorporated," and Klu Klux Klan, and some others, have placed themselves outside the moral community and have surrendered the protection of its norms. Thus the social scientist need have no qualms about reporting in full detail the activities of such groups and people.[61]

Becker emphasizes that information can be used by outsiders against those being studied. "Their enemies may make use of the opportunity to embarrass or attack them."[62] An example of this would be the use of Vietnamese field studies, by military intelligence, during the Vietnam war. A partial solution to this problem was offered by Barnes in "Some

Ethical Problems in Modern Fieldwork." "One way of protecting informants from the effects of publication is to give them pseudonyms."[63]

We have utilized pseudonyms in the place of real names of those individuals and organizations discussed in the study. It is our concern and responsibility that these individuals and organizations not be adversely affected by our analysis.

Barnes speculates on the role of the field researcher. "The ethnographer has to define his role, or try to do so, so that he can retain the good will of his informants and of the administration, continue to gain the flow of information essential to his research task, and yet remain true to his own basic values."[64]

Further distinctions, in relation to moral codes, are offered by Erikson.

> But a good deal more is at stake here than the sensitivities of any particular person, and my excuse for dealing with an issue that seems to have so many subjective overtones is that the use of disguises in social research affects the professional climate in which all of us work and raises a number of methodological questions that should be discussed more widely.
>
> I am assuming here that "personal morality" and "professional ethics" are not the same thing. Personal morality has something to do with the way an individual conducts himself across the range of his human contacts; it is not local to a particular group of persons or to a particular set of occupational interests. Professional ethics, on the other hand, refer to the way a group of associates define their responsibility to one another and to the rest of the social order in which they work.[65] (reduced type)

Erikson continues this discussion and offers basic guidelines regarding disguised observation.

> What I propose, then, at least as a beginning, is the following: first, that it is unethical for a sociologist to deliberately misrepresent his identity for the purpose of entering a private domain to which he is not otherwise eligible; and second, that it is unethical for a sociologist to deliberately misrepresent the character of the research in which he is engaged.[66]

Although there are research settings which might ethically dictate a covert approach, we believe long term participant observation can best be enhanced with an overt approach. Aside from the mutual respect the social scientist owes to society, an overt approach also protects the researcher's self concept. If one enters the field covertly, and believes oneself to be "spying," then one could easily come to think of oneself as a "spy." A covert researcher must always be on guard to protect his/her true motivation for participation with a group. Such an altered self concept would interfere with the researcher's interactions with those being studied. Thus, the persons being studied would be reacting to a covert researcher, not an overt participant observer. The overt researcher does not need to worry about the participant and researcher extremes which comprise the covert researcher. The overt researcher has a single base to work from, that of overt participant observer.

I represented myself primarily as a "member" of the Co-op and secondarily as a "researcher" of the organization. Similarly, I represented myself primarily as the "Resident Supervisor" of the fraternity and secondarily as a "researcher" of the organization. It was my intent to approach the field overtly. Situational variables dictated the extent

and means by which I revealed my secondary (researcher) role. I generally sought to discuss my research interests on a one-to-one basis to enhance clarification of these interests.

Results and Evaluation

After the data collection period, we divided our data into eight quadrants. The quadrants were classified according to different types of conflict resolution communication situations. The eight quadrants were divided, four to each organization, and distinctions were based on formal and informal settings and high and low level controversy issues. Thus, the four quadrants for each organization were high level controversy issues in formal settings, low level controversy issues in formal settings, high level controversy issues in informal settings, and low level controversy issues in informal settings. Our findings are based on the consistencies which existed, regarding conflict resolution communication attempts within each quadrant.

Results of the study indicate Co-op conflict resolution communication attempts were based on a counterculture philosophy on the organizational behavior level (i.e. ritual, procedures, clothing styles, jargon, and norms), but the Co-op conflict resolution communication attempts were basically the same as the fraternity conflict resolution communication attempts on the core philosophy level. That is, the Co-op conflict resolution communication attempts exemplified dominant culture attempts on the core philosophy level.

The formal conflict resolution formats differed, but the power bases were the same. Power was usually based on who had information and position.

We found the Co-op generally used a form of voting within the consensus process framework, instead of using the actual consensus process.[67] The fraternity would simply discuss an issue and then vote on it.

The egalitarian ideals advocated by the Co-op were only superficially evident. Egalitarian ideals were evident on the organizational behavior level, but not on the core philosophy level. Egalitarian ideals were evident within Co-op rituals, procedures, clothing styles, jargon, and norms, but the egalitarian ideals were not recognized as genuine on the core philosophy level. The Co-op presented itself as egalitarian, but our analysis found consistent behavior contradictory to egalitarian ideals. Informal levels of influence were recognized within the Co-op and the fraternity.

The informal hierarchies within the Co-op and fraternity affected the conflict resolution communication processes in both formal and informal settings. The fraternity informal hierarchy was based on office held within the fraternity, physical size of the member, wit of the member, and the member's pin number. The Co-op informal hierarchy was recognized according to the member's ability to be identified with and by other members. Member participation was also recognized as a factor affecting the informal hierarchies of both organizations. That is, participation in the organizations led to enhanced knowledge of the functioning of the organizations and, in turn, led to a position of referent power within the organizations.

These findings can be readily interpreted from the dramaturgical school of symbolic interaction. That is, social interaction is based on the management of impressions we receive from each other. The Co-op presented itself as using a consensus process, in formal situations, but analysis found it actually used a form of voting. The Co-op presented

itself as egalitarian, in informal situations, but analysis found it actually had a recognized hierarchy among the membership. Thus, the Co-op presented itself as practicing a countercultural philosophy, but analysis found it actually practiced dominant culture approaches in communication attempts at conflict resolution.

Erving Goffman developes the dramaturgical ideal in The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life.

> I have said that when an individual appears before others his actions will influence the definition of the situation which they come to have.[68]
>
> When an individual appears before others he will have many motives for trying to control the impression they receive of the situation.[69]
>
> In consequence, when an individual projects a definition of the situation and thereby makes an implicit or explicit claim to be a person of a particular kind he automatically exerts a moral demand upon the others, obliging them to value and treat him in the manner that persons of his kind have a right to expect.[70]

The importance of the conflict resolution communication attempts is that the attempts constructed a presentation made by the organization and its members.

Our goal in writing this article has been to describe and discuss the symbolic interactionist use of participant observation. We have sought to further clarify this approach by applying the theory to a study we undertook which subsequently involved the symbolic interactionist use of participant observation.

The symbolic interactionist use of participant observation, of course,

is not limited to studies involving conflict resolution within a countercultural setting. This approach can be readily applied to a variety of research problems in a variety of settings. Different types of research problems can best be investigated through different types of approaches. It is our hope the symbolic interactionist use of participant observation will be seriously considered as a viable alternative when attempting to study the human being communicating in his/her natural habitat.

Notes

[1]R. L. Nwanko, "Communication as Symbolic Interaction: A Synthesis," Journal of Communication, No. 23 (1973), p. 207.

[2]B. E. Gronbeck, "Dramaturgical Theory and Criticism: The State of the Art (or Science?)," The Western Journal of Speech Communication, No. 44 (1980), p. 327.

[3]M. Hickson, "Ethnomethodology: The Promise of Applied Communication Research?," The Southern Speech Communication Journal, No. 48 (1983), p. 186.

[4]W. A. Beach, "Everyday Interaction and It's Practical Accomplishment: Progressive Developments in Ethnomethodological Research," Quarterly Journal of Speech, No. 68 (1982), p. 314.

[5]M. S. Poole, "Notes on Observational Methods," Speech Communication Association Convention, Louisville, Kentucky, 6 Nov. 1982.

[6]G. Philipsen, "Speaking 'Like a Man' in Teamsterville: Culture Patterns of Role Enactment in an Urban Neighborhood," Quarterly Journal of Speech, No. 61 (1975), p. 22.

[7]T. Garner, "Playing the Dozens: Folklore as Strategies for Living," Quarterly Journal of Speech, No. 69 (1983), pp. 47-57.

[8]The study is described in more detail in _____, "An Ethnographic Study: Comparison of Conflict Resolution Communication in the Woodstock Food Cooperative and Sigma Tau Omega Fraternity," Diss. _____ 1982.

[9]Pin numbers are assigned when fraternity members complete their pledge program. Thus, newer members have higher pin numbers. The pin number

provides a seniority ranking within the fraternity.

[10]I. Robertson, Sociology (New York: Worth Publishers, 1977), pp. 16-21.

[11]B. N. Meltzer, J. W. Petras, and L. T. Reynolds, Symbolic Interactionism (Boston: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1977), pp. 1-40.

[12]Meltzer, Petras, and Reynolds, pp. 55-67.

[13]Meltzer, Petras, and Reynolds, pp. 55-67.

[14]S. W. Littlejohn, "Symbolic Interactionism as an Approach to the Study of Human Communication," Quarterly Journal of Speech, No. 63 (1977), p. 88.

[15]E. Goffman, The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1959).

[16]E. Goffman, Interaction Ritual (Garden City, New York: Anchor Books, 1967).

[17]E. Goffman, Encounters (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1961).

[18]R. Lauer and W. Handel, Social Psychology: The Theory and Application of Symbolic Interactionism (Boston: Houghton-Mifflin Co., 1977), p. 275.

[19]H. Blumer, Symbolic Interactionism (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1969), p. 2.

[20]Meltzer, Petras, and Reynolds, pp. 57-60.

[21]W. Filstead, Qualitative Methodology (Chicago: Markham Publishing Co., 1970), p. 141.

[22]G. R. Miller and H. W. Simons, eds., Perspectives on Communication and Conflict (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1974), p. 218.

[23]F. E. Jandt, ed., Conflict Resolution Through Communication (New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1973), pp. xiii-xiv.

[24]Meltzer, Petras, and Reynolds, pp. 55-60.

[25]M. H. Kuhn, "Major Trends in Symbolic Interaction Theory in the Past Twenty-Five Years," The Sociological Quarterly, No. 5 (1964), pp. 61-84.

[26]J. G. Manis and B. N. Meltzer, eds., Symbolic Interaction (Boston: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1972), pp. 575-577.

[27]Littlejohn, p. 85.

[28]Littlejohn, p. 85.

[29]D. P. Faules and D. C. Alexander, Communication and Social Behavior: A Symbolic Interaction Perspective (Reading, Massachusetts: Addison-Wesley Publishing Co., 1978), p. 167.

[30]Faules and Alexander, p. 168.

[31]Faules and Alexander, p. 246.

[32]P. Watzlawick, J. H. Beavin, and D. D. Jackson, Pragmatics of Human Communication (New York: Norton, 1967), pp. 51-54.

[33]Faules and Alexander, p. 143.

[34]Littlejohn, p. 91.

[35]Meltzer, Petras, and Reynolds, pp. 57-58.

[36]J. S. Himes, Conflict and Conflict Management (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1980), p. 235.

[37]Filstead, p. 141.

[38]J. Johnson, Doing Field Research (New York: Free Press, 1975), p. x.

[39]Johnson, pp. ix-x.

[40]S. Labovitz and R. Hagedorn, Introduction to Social Research (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1971), pp. 56-57.

[41]E. Liebow, Talley's Corner (Boston: Little, Brown, and Co., 1967), p. 235.

[42]B. Junker, Fieldwork: An Introduction to the Social Sciences

(Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1960), p. 13.

[43]Liebow, p. 256.

[44]Although the authors worked together on data analysis, only one of the authors (_____) had direct contact with the organizations for data gathering purposes. This approach was advantageous as the other author (_____) provided a high degree of objectivity, during the data analysis, since he had not experienced personal contact with the organizations which were studied. The use of "I" will indicate _____ throughout the discussion of the method.

[45]Filstead, p. 220.

[46]J. Peacock, Rites of Modernization (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1968), p. 270.

[47]W. B. Shaffir, R. A. Stebbins, and A. Turowetz, Fieldwork Experience: Qualitative Approaches to Social Research (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1980), pp. 11-12.

[48]Filstead, p. 202.

[49]R. A. Zeller and E. G. Carmines, Measurement in the Social Sciences (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), p. 49.

[50]J. W. Best, Research in Education (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1977), p. 190.

[51]Filstead, p. 189.

[52]M. W. Riley, Sociological Research (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and World, Inc., 1963), p. 71.

[53]G. J. McCall and J. L. Simons, eds., Issues in Participant Observation (Reading, Massachusetts: Addison-Wesley, 1969), p. 78.

[54]Johnson, pp. 86-89.

[55]R. Wax, "Reciprocity as a Field Technique," Human Organization,

No. 11 (1952), pp. 34-37.

[56]Johnson, p. 89.

[57]Johnson, p. 87.

[58]Johnson, p. 88.

[59]Junker, p. 35.

[60]Filstead, pp. 267-268.

[61]Filstead, p. 268.

[62]H. S. Becker, Sociological Work (Chicago: Aldine Publishing Co., 1970), p. 86.

[63]Filstead, p. 246.

[64]Filstead, p. 240.

[65]Filstead, p. 253.

[66]Filstead, p. 259.

[67]The consensus process is a formal decision making process whereby all members present must agree on the proposed course of action. Disagreements are to be worked out through discussion and compromise. Theoretically, one member can have veto power over any proposed course of action.

[68]Goffman, Presentation, p. 6.

[69]Goffman, Presentation, p. 15.

[70]Goffman, Presentation, p. 13.

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